



ICICLES

Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Language, Education and Socio-emotional Skills



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The Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Language, Educational and Socioemotional Skills

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Introduction

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on children's education and well being. Partial school closures, Covid-19 restrictions and disruption caused by staff and pupil absences has meant that children have not had a normal school year since 2019. It is therefore vital that we try to monitor the impact of this disruption on pupil's outcomes so that we can provide targeted support for children at risk of underachievement. However, we also need to take account of the impact the pandemic has had on teachers and school staff. This report summarises the findings from a teachers survey carried out in the Autumn and Spring terms 2021/22 in terms of children's progress and teacher's main concerns.

What did we do?

We surveyed schools over the course of the Autumn and Spring terms 2021/22
We also carried out a series of interviews with school staff

Who took part?

Forty-four schools across England took part in this phase of the study; 50% were academies or free schools and 50% were maintained schools



The percentage of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) ranged from 3% to 70% with an average of 27.5% which is higher than the national average of 21.6%



Schools had approximately 45 children in each year group



The number of children in the schools ranged from 26 to 509



The percentage of children learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) ranged from 5% to 71% with an average of 17.98% which is lower than the national average of 20.9%



The percentage of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) ranged from 0 to 77% with an average of 17.19% which is higher than the national average of 12.6%

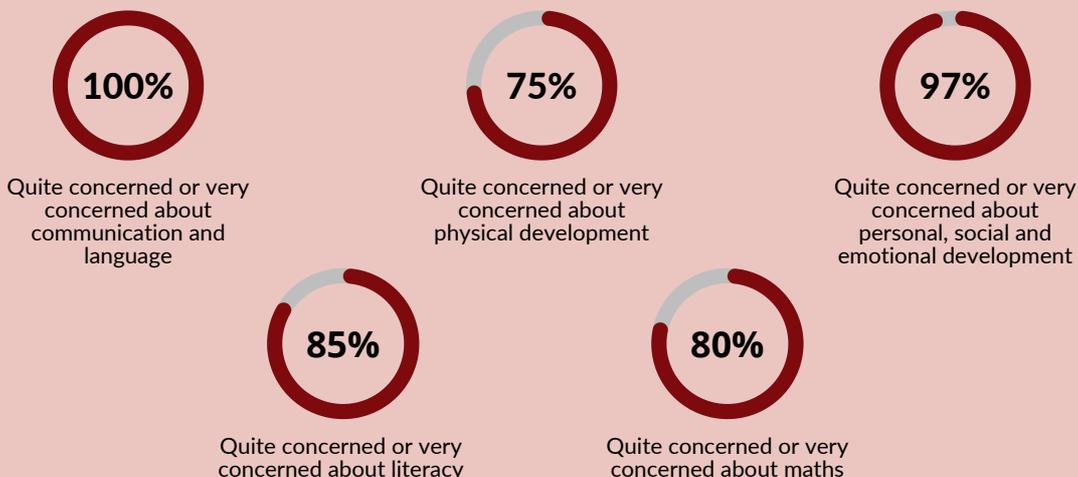


What did we find?

Concerns about children's progress

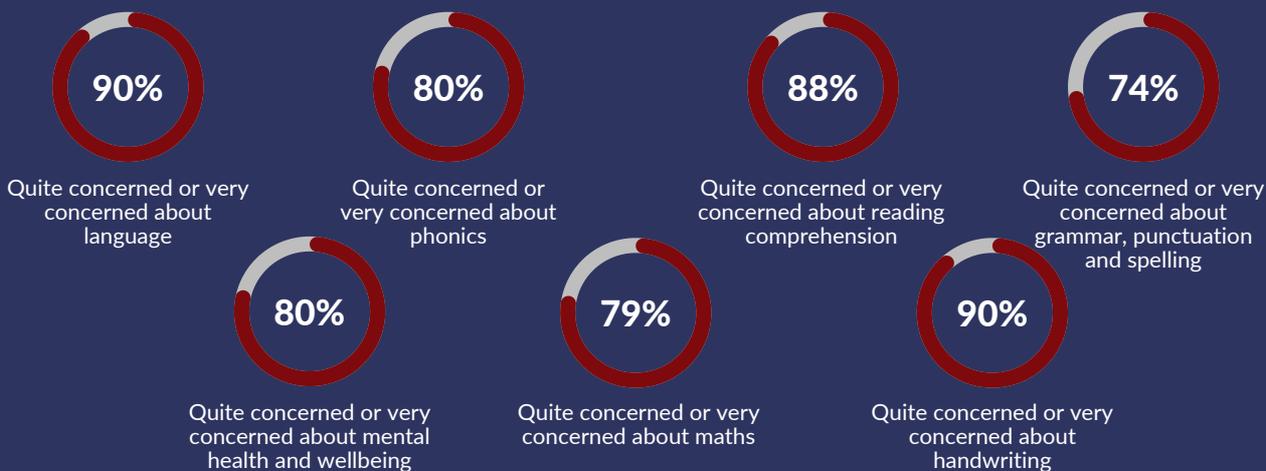
Reception

Percentage of respondents concerned about different learning areas of the EYFS



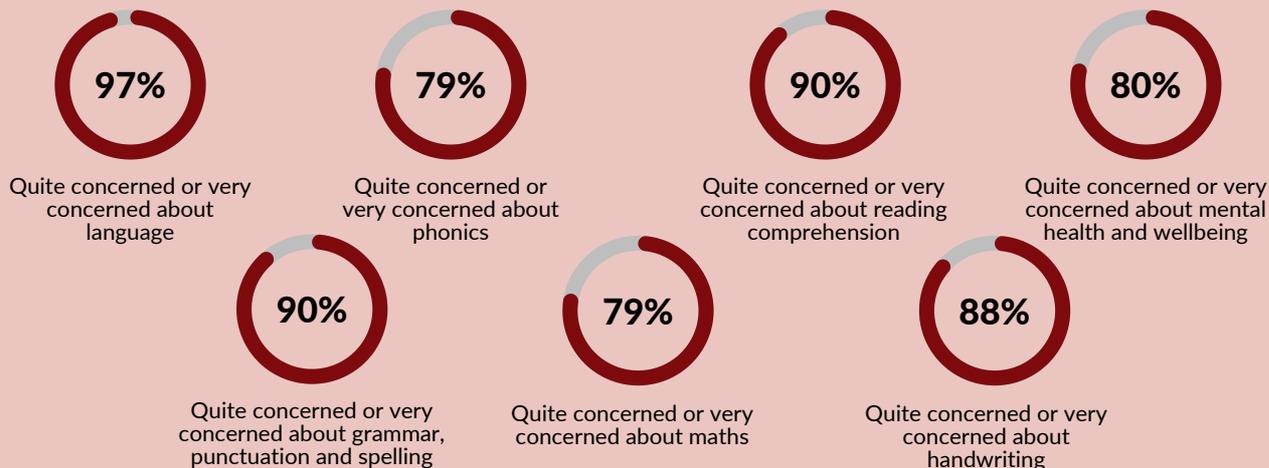
Year One

Percentage of respondents concerned about different areas of learning



Year Two

Percentage of respondents concerned about different areas of learning



Main concerns identified through surveys and interviews

Teachers reported that some children are struggling with basic skills such as feeding themselves, and using the toilet. They reported that children are less independent, less resilient and struggle with their emotions and self-regulation. Some children are struggling to develop relationships with each other and they also reported they need support to play together.



Teachers mentioned that at the beginning of this academic year, children had poorer language skills compared to pre pandemic cohorts. Children also had difficulties listening to others, answering and asking questions, and taking turns when talking to others. These difficulties are more prevalent now than in pre pandemic cohorts.

Children in more deprived areas and from lower socioeconomic status (SES) have been affected the most as they did not have the same opportunities, resources and support as children and families from more affluent areas. Language skills have been particularly affected in children with EAL.



Teachers mentioned that even though children are progressing, it will take time for them to catch up.

In addition, respondents reported concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of staff. Six schools specifically mentioned the difficulties dealing with staff absences, seven schools specifically mentioned concerns about teachers resilience and mental health.



Teachers and headteachers reported that the pandemic and school disruptions significantly increased their workload and scope of responsibilities. While things are now “back to normal” teachers are still having to work around additional responsibilities with limited support and funding, which adds to an already quite intense workload. Some schools are concerned about their staff members reaching burnout.

A common topic among teachers and headteachers was how they feel their profession was and is viewed. Many people assumed that during the lockdowns they were at home not working while parents oversaw their children’s education. These types of comments have made them feel undervalued and underappreciated, with a significant number of teachers reconsidering if they want to continue working in this profession.



Teachers are still under significant amounts of pressure that is affecting their mental health and wellbeing. While there is a general feeling that everything is “back to normal” schools are still observing disruptions as teachers are still getting sick and schools are finding it difficult to get supply teachers. Schools are even finding it difficult to recruit for new posts as fewer people are applying compared to before the pandemic.



Summary

- Despite a public narrative of society having “**returned to normal**”, these findings suggest that for schools at least this is **not the case**.
- The impact of the **pandemic on our youngest learners has been significant**, with **children struggling to develop basic social and physical skills**.
- For teachers, the pandemic has had a significant impact on their **mental health and wellbeing**. The pressure on teachers to ensure children reach the expected standards on statutory assessments will only exacerbate this.

**For more information on this project visit
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